



THE SHAR'EE RULING REGARDING MUFTI TAQI SAHEB'S FACE-TO-FACE INTERVIEW WITH A RUSSIAN WOMAN

QUESTION:

I am a university student and there is a discussion on campus whether it is permissible for the boys and girls to sit close together and chat on campus. They are saying that Mufti Taqi Usmani sat close to a young Russian woman in an interview without any screen separating them. Throughout the interview, he maintained eye contact with her, and she likewise maintained eye contact with him. The students are saying that it is ok for boys and girls to look at each other in today's time. How do I explain to the students that Mufti Taqi's actions are wrong? It seems as though the floodgates of fitnah have opened with this interview. Please help urgently with a detailed answer.

ANSWER:

From the outset, it must be clearly understood that in matters of Deen, the ultimate proof is the Quraan, the Sunnah, and Ijmaa (consensus) of the Ummah. **No personality—regardless of his status, scholarship, or piety—is an independent proof in himself.** Rather, the statements and actions of every individual are accepted or rejected according to their conformity with these primary sources. This fundamental principle is aptly expressed by Abdullah ibn Mubarak (rahimahullah), who said, *"Leave aside mentioning men as proof. A man may hold a lofty position in Islam, yet he may make a serious mistake. Is it then permissible for anyone to take his mistake as proof?"* (Al-Shatibi, Al-Muwafaqat, 5/138)

After quoting this statement, Imam Shatibi (rahimahullah) comments, *"If it is apparent and clear that the statement (or action) of a person is in opposition to the Quraan or the Sunnah, then it is not correct to judge according to it or to build a ruling upon it."* (Al-Muwafaqat, 5/138)

Accordingly, this **broadcasted interview of Mufti Taqi Saheb with a non-mahram young woman** cannot be considered evidence of permissibility simply because he is regarded as a senior scholar. It must first be weighed against the teachings of the Shari'ah.

As for the Shari'ah, its ruling on this issue is clearly established in the Quraan, the Sunnah, and the rulings of the jurists.

The Quraan

The Quraan clearly commands, **"Tell the believing men to lower their gazes and guard their private parts..."** (Surah al-Nur, Ayah 30)

"And when you ask them (the blessed wives of Rasulullah (sallallahu alayhi wasallam)) for anything, ask them from behind a veil." (Surah al-Ahzab, Ayah 53)

Although this second verse was revealed concerning the blessed wives of Rasulullah (sallallahu alayhi wasallam), the ruling is not confined to them. Rather, the commentators of the Quraan have explained that this verse is of general application and applies to all believers.

The Sunnah

There are numerous ahadith emphasising the obligation of lowering the gaze. Among them is the narration of Rasulullah (sallallahu alayhi wasallam), ***"The incorrect glance is a poisonous arrow from the arrows of Shaytaan."*** (Al-Mustadrak 'ala al-Sahihayn, 4/314)

Similarly, during the Farewell Hajj, just a few days before the demise of Rasulullah (sallallahu alayhi wasallam), Hadrat Aa'isha (radiyallahu anha) mentions, ***"Riders would pass by us while we were with the Rasulullah (sallallahu alayhi wasallam) in the state of ihram. When they came in line with us, every one of us would lower her jilbab (her outer covering) from her head over her face. When they had passed us, we would uncover our faces."*** (Sunan Abi Dawud, no. 1833)

The ruling of the Jurists

Owing to the widespread corruption and fitnah of our time, the jurists unequivocally ruled that looking at a young non-mahram woman is haraam, even in the absence of desire. (Radd al-Muhtaar, vol 6, pg. 370). This ruling cannot be overturned on the basis of an isolated opinion or the action of any individual.

A well-known example of this principle is the ruling on intoxicating drinks other than grape wine (*khamr*), such as fermented drinks made from dates, raisins, barley, or wheat. Modern examples of intoxicants made from barley or wheat include whisky and vodka. Although there was an opinion that such drinks were not prohibited in small amounts so long as they did not intoxicate, the Ummah ultimately adopted the view that everything capable of causing intoxication is haraam, whether consumed in a small amount or a large amount. (Radd al-Muhtaar, vol 6, pg. 455)

Therefore, if someone were to come forward today and, on the basis of the above view, claim that vodka, drugs, rock cocaine, or dagga are halaal, his opinion would be rejected by one and all.

In the very same manner, the agreed ruling according to the Fuqahaa regarding looking at non-mahram women cannot be abandoned merely because a contemporary scholar acted indifferently or because of an isolated view. The Shari'ah is established by the Quraan, the Sunnah, and the understanding of the jurists - not by the practice of any individual or an isolated view.

The Ulama have strongly condemned the searching for concessions and isolated views to suit one's desires. In this regard, Sulayman al-Taymi (rahimahullah) (d. 143 AH), the distinguished Tabi'i and eminent scholar of hadith, said, ***"If you were to take the concession (rukhsah) of every Aalim, you would become a conglomeration of evil."*** (Jaami' Bayaan al-Ilm wa Fadlih, 2/927)

Similarly, Imaam al-Awza'i (rahimahullah) (d. 157 AH), said, ***"Whoever follows the isolated (and lenient) opinions of the Ulama departs from Islam."*** (Jaami' Bayaan al-Ilm wa Fadlih, 2/927)

The greater responsibility of an Aalim

Hadrat Mufti Muhammad Shafi Saheb (rahimahullah), the world-renowned Mufti of Pakistan and the father of Mufti Taqi Saheb, explains while commenting on Ayah 104 of Surah al-Baqarah, *“This verse shows that if a permissible action may lead others into impermissible actions, then that permissible action also becomes impermissible. For example, if an Aalim does something permissible but it is likely that it may mislead people into committing prohibited acts, then it becomes forbidden for that Aalim to do it, provided that action is not essential in the Shari’ah.”* (Maariful-Quraan, pg. 280, vol 1)

From this, it is clear that, an Aalim of Deen, and even more so a *muqtada* (one who is regarded as an authority and looked up to by others), bears a **responsibility far greater** than that of the ordinary Muslims. Accordingly, there are occasions when he is required to refrain even from actions that are normally permissible, **let alone actions that are doubtful or prohibited**, if there is a likelihood that his conduct may mislead others or become a means for people to justify impermissible practices.

In light of this principle, **the seriousness of Mufti Taqi Saheb’s publicly broadcast interview with a non-mahram woman is further increased**, as it gives people the impression that such interaction with strange women is permissible. As your question itself demonstrates, some may use his action as proof that free intermingling between unrelated men and women is allowed, whereas such intermingling is not permissible according to the Shari’ah.

Furthermore, **Mufti Taqi Saheb permits digital photography and personally engages in it**, as was the case in this formally filmed and publicly broadcast interview. This is despite the widespread and devastating harm that digital photography has brought to individuals, families, and societies, making it all the more necessary for a scholar whose actions are closely observed to refrain from it.

The devastating consequences of digital photography

It is well known that media platforms are driven by profit, and sensual and indecent images attract more attention and generate more revenue. As a result, it is almost impossible for a consumer of digital photography to avoid indecent images. Even if not sought intentionally, such exposure normalizes indecency, **making it easier for one who engages with digital photography to slip into pornography**.

Statistics clearly show that **every new stage of photography** made it easier, faster, and cheaper to create and share **pornography**. As pornography increased, **divorce rates** also rose significantly. Hence, a survey of 350 divorce lawyers found that in over 56% of the divorce cases they handled, one spouse's frequent use of online pornography contributed to the divorce. (*American Academy of Matrimonial Lawyers*).

Another study found that married individuals who began viewing pornography were **twice as likely to divorce** compared to those who did not view pornography. (*“Till Porn Do Us Part? A Longitudinal Examination of Pornography Use and Divorce”*)

If we examine the root of the problem, it becomes clear that **digital photography has been the main means through which pornography spread across the world**. This, in turn, has contributed to the breakdown of countless marriages and families. This is the devastating and widespread harm caused by digital photography. It has become a destructive force, tearing apart families, corrupting morals, and weakening societies across the globe.

How apt and profound is the statement of Hadrat Maulana Yusuf Binnori Saheb (rahimahullah), the teacher of Mufti Taqi Saheb, *"The fitnah of photography has begun. Is it a minor sin? Countless fitnahs and evils arise from it. The One whose knowledge encompasses all things knew that through such means, endless corruption and evil would spread; therefore, He prohibited it."* (Daur Hadir ka Fitnah, p. 45)

Departing from the way of the pious predecessors

Hadrat Abdullah ibn Mas'ud (radiyallahu anhu) said, *"Whoever wishes to follow a path should follow the path of those who have passed away, for the living are not safe from fitnah (trial)."* (Mishkaat al-Masabih, 1/274)

This profound statement lays down a fundamental principle regarding whom a Muslim should follow. We understand from it that those who tread the path of the Sahabah (radiyallahu anhum) and, thereafter, the pious predecessors are worthy of being followed and emulated. **As for one who departs from their path or opposes their way, he is not to be followed and emulated.**

Mufti Taqi Saheb has expressed a number of views that are contrary to the Quraan, the Sunnah, and the way of the pious predecessors. One such example relates to the role of women outside the home. His public interview with a non-mahram woman on the subject of Islamic Finance gives the impression that it is acceptable for women to pursue professional careers and to interact freely with unrelated men.

However, this stands in contrast to the guidance of Rasulullah (sallallahu alayhi wasallam), who assigned Hazrat Faatimah (radiyallahu anha), the queen of the women of Jannah, the responsibility of managing the affairs within the home, while assigning Hazrat Ali (radiyallahu anhu) the responsibilities outside the home. (Musannaf Ibn Abi Shaybah, no. 29677)

Furthermore, Mufti Taqi Saheb has encouraged women to leave their homes in order to pursue certain fields of study (Fatawaa Uthmaniya, vol. 4, pg. 234-237). This view stands in complete contrast to the injunctions of the Quraan and the Sunnah, as well as to the position of the pious predecessors who, when confronted with this issue in their own time, consistently discouraged women from attending universities. Moreover, the harms associated with the modern university environment are numerous and, in today's world, are evident and widely acknowledged.

The devastating effects of the university environment

Modern research itself has highlighted the dangers prevalent within university environments. The following are just a few findings and statistics from **Western studies** regarding the harms experienced by women, *"Studies make clear that women who attend academic institutions in states across*

the country are at substantial risk of experiencing sexual assault.... Across many studies, a consistent one in four to one in three college women report experiencing an act that meets the legal definition of rape or attempted rape." (Victimization and Academic Performance, University of Kentucky, 2014, p. 3)

Likewise, a survey of 3,187 female college students from various universities reported **837 cases of sexual coercion** affecting 366 victims and **2,024 incidents of unwanted sexual contact** involving 886 victims within the period studied.

The report also stated, *"These rapes are no recent campus fad or the fantasy of a few jilted females. They are real. And they are happening all around us."* (Sexual Assault on the College Campus: The Role of Male Peer Support, pp. 25–26). Another Western study concluded, *"The increase in (secular) education increases the probability of a person declaring himself/herself atheist."* (Does Secular education impact religiosity, pg. 22)

Moreover, these problems are not confined to Western countries. Similarly, and in some cases even worse, statistics have unfortunately been reported in many Muslim countries and countries with large Muslim populations.

In light of these realities, is it worth exposing a woman's honour, modesty, and even her Imaan to such risks merely for the sake of a small financial gain or under the pretext of serving the community?

In conclusion, it is the duty of every Muslim to exercise great care regarding whom he takes his Deen from. As Ibn Sirin (rahimahullah) famously said, *"Indeed, this knowledge is your Deen, **so be very careful from whom you take your Deen.**"* (Al-Tabaqat al-Kubra, 9/193)

We make dua that Allah Rabbul Izzah makes what is correct appear correct to us and grants us the ability to follow it and that Allah Rabbul Izzah makes falsehood appear false to us and grants us the ability to refrain from it.

And Allah Ta'ala knows best



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